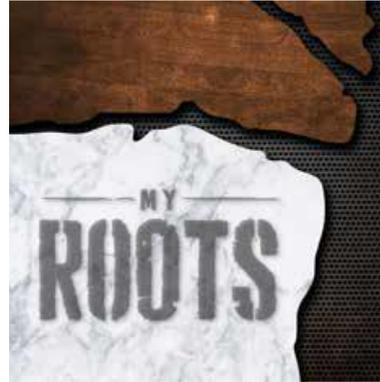


Small Business of the Year Nominee

Name of Business: My Roots
Address: 9 W. Loockerman St., Dover, De 19904
Primary Contact: Lori Llewellyn, Owner
Telephone: 302-883-2697
Website: www.lovemylroots.com



Describe the business:

Mission/Philosophy: Life is too short to wear boring clothes or have messy hair! My Roots is a clothing boutique and full-service hair salon for ladies and lads. We provide a unique and personal shopping experience from the moment you enter. You are certain to leave My Roots in style!

Primary good or service provided: We sell trendy, unique clothing in our Boutique and provide a full salon service in our Styling Gallery. When you come visit us, you will not only get great clothes, you will get a great experience.

Number of years in business: 2 1/2 years

How did your business start?

I am a girl from a small town in New Brunswick, Canada. We grew up simple with not a lot of shopping options. Opening my own Boutique would allow this small town to get a personal shopping experience. Prior to opening my business, I worked in the corporate world for many years. My last position required a ton of out of state and overnight travel. I started this business to be my own boss and spend more time with my family.

I surrounded myself with a strong support team. The revitalization of Downtown Dover is very important to me. I found a space to lease on Loockerman St. With the help of my husband Cameron, we were able to design the perfect space for my vision to provide a personal and unique shopping experience. I obtained financing through local grants and a business loan through Dover Federal Credit Union. Four months from the day I started my journey, we opened our doors.

Number of employees: Full-time: 1 (myself); Part-time: 1

Describe the growth of your business:

In staffing increases: Staffing for the Boutique has remained the same.

In Sales: In my 2 years of business I have seen a 25 % increase in sales.

Describe the challenges facing your business:

Online shopping is a challenge that many small businesses are facing. Another challenge is lack of foot traffic in downtown.

Describe solutions developed to address those challenges:

One solution we developed in the first year was to add a full-service hair salon to our space. I had extra room that was not being utilized. My best friend, Jessica Thomas, opened a sister business, My Roots Styling Gallery which is located at the back of the Boutique. This allows customers to get the full makeover experience. We have been able to cross promote and work to build clientele for both the Boutique and the Styling Gallery. This innovation has resulted in more consistent sales and has broadened our customer base.

Another solution that we came up with was to host events in the store. This has helped promote our business and generate sales. We have also worked with other merchants to enhance the Downtown Dover shopping experience. For example, this past holiday season we collaborated with Bel Boutique and The Loocke to host a Desperate Dudes Event. This allowed for private personalized shopping and gift assistance to our shared customer base. We enhanced the experience with fun giveaways, gift wrapping and refreshments.

Social media has been our main way to connect with our customers. A live Facebook feed from our store on “Thirsty Thursday” allows us to stay engaged. We offer a little entertainment to our customers while showing new merchandise virtually. During this current State of Emergency, we have been forced to close our physical store doors. We have been successful in continuing with our “Thirsty Thursday” broadcast. We are able to provide a unique virtual customer experience.

Describe a creative, imaginative or innovative process you have developed that has helped your business grow:

We added a full-service hair salon, My Roots Styling Gallery, in the space at the back of the Boutique. This innovative idea has resulted in more consistent sales and has broadened our customer base through cross promotion and building the clientele for both the Boutique and the Styling Gallery. This allows customers to get the makeover experience.

What are the goals for your business in the next three to five years?

One major goal is to develop and roll out an e-commerce website. This will help the challenge we face with online shopping competition. I love being in Downtown Dover and will continue to look for innovative ways to bring people to our Downtown community. I want to be a thriving business in years to come in a revitalized Downtown community that is flourishing.

What distinguishes your business from the others?

We offer a personal shopping experience at My Roots. We have created an aesthetically pleasing atmosphere with unique and trendy choices. We know our customers by name. We are with our customers from start to finish assisting with finding the perfect clothing pieces. We offer services in personal fashion, individual hair style and overall fun and beauty all in one place.

What contributions have you made in the community?

Serving on boards/committees: I am passionate and invested in helping to revitalize Downtown Dover. Through the Downtown Dover Partnership, I actively co-chair the Merchant Committee. We are committed to enhance the Downtown Dover business district through business communication, networking support, and promotional activities. I am also active on the First Friday Committee. Our committee was organizing this event in cold months only until recently. We are now fully responsible for First Friday’s from themes, to programming and participation. First Friday remains successful. I am an active member of the CDCC Board. I love being a connection between the CDCC and the small business and Downtown Dover community.

Providing in-kind services: My Roots is often asked to donate to local organizations. We donate store merchandise or gift cards. We feel it’s important to give back to the Community that supports us and the other Downtown Dover Businesses.